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ABSTRACT

This study compares the academic preparation of American Indian, Black, and Hispanic American students with that of White students in the Omaha (Nebraska) Public Schools (OPS). The following measures were examined: (1) racial composition, indicating the school's social and academic atmosphere; (2) student-teacher ratios, indicating educational quality; (3) California Achievement Test (CAT) scores, indicating academic achievement; (4) placement of special needs students, indicating educational quality; and (5) the number of high school graduates who attend college or obtain employment. The following findings are discussed: (1) the voluntary desegregation plan has increased the social, economic, and ethnic diversity of the schools; (2) the teaching staff has been more equitably distributed among the schools and the student-teacher ratios have been reduced; (3) minority group students tend to score lower on achievement tests than do White students, but the difference decreases over time; (4) more minority group students are placed in remedial programs than White students and more White students are placed in programs for the gifted than minority group students; and (5) a large percentage of both minority group students and White students continue their education and/or find employment after high school graduation, but the difference between minority group students and White students persists. Statistical data are presented in seven tables. A list of nine references is appended. (FMW)

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ACADEMIC PREPARATION OF MINORITIES IN THE OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ACADEMIC PREPARATION OF MINORITIES IN THE OMAHA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Education is closely related to measures of economic success in the United States. People who graduate from high school generally earn more than those who do not, and those graduating from college tend to earn more than those with only a high school education. Career paths are, then, a function of education attainment (years of school completed) as well as achievement (performance in the classroom). Attainment and achievement for a particular student result from a wide variety of factors. One of these is the quality of instruction and preparation received from the schools. It is natural, therefore, that minority¹ parents, anxious for their children to be successful in the competitive job markets of this country, are concerned that their children receive the greatest benefit possible from the available school systems.

For the preponderance of minorities living in the city of Omaha, the Omaha Public School District (OPS) educates their children. OPS serves 80 percent of minority students living in Douglas and Sarpy Counties, 90 percent of Black students, 80 percent of American Indian students, and 60 percent of Hispanic students living in these counties². Therefore, it is largely to OPS that one must look in order to assess the academic preparation of minority students in this city.

Assessing Academic Preparation

Academic preparation may be measured in a number of ways. This report focuses on five aspects that help establish a picture of the district's attention to minority students.

- Racial composition of the schools indicates the degree to which the schools provide an atmosphere for social as well as academic learning.
- Student/teacher ratios reflect the degree of equity in providing quality education. Generally, lower student/teacher ratios indicate an opportunity for teachers to devote more time to students and allow more interaction between teachers and individual students. Educators tend to agree that, within the limits of economics, lower ratios are better.
- Standardized tests are devices commonly used by educators to assess the academic achievement of students. OPS, like most other school systems in the United States, relies on the California Achievement Test (CAT). The performance of minority students compared to white students gives some measure of their respective academic preparation.
- The attention paid to the special needs of students, both those with special talents and those with learning deficiencies, also reflects on the quality of academic preparation. Again, minority participation in special programs will be compared to white participation.
- Finally, the ability of graduates of the system to move on to college or into the job market is perhaps the acid test of preparation. Students who are well prepared are more like-

ly, all other things being equal, to be accepted by colleges or to find employment. They are also more likely to advance once employment is found.

Racial Composition of Omaha Public Schools

Prior to 1975, Omaha Public Schools were segregated racially and ethnically, as were most schools in the nation, due to the racial and ethnic patterns of neighborhoods. In many cities, this segregation was also fostered by governmental policy (a situation banned by the landmark *Brown v Board of Education* 1954 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court).

In 1975, the Omaha Public Schools were found in violation of federal laws barring *de jure* (resulting from public policy) racial segregation. As a result the school district was instructed

Table 1: Minority Enrollments in OPS High Schools, 1975-1987, 1988 Projected

School	1975		1982		1987		1988 Projected If No Desegregation Plan [†]	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Benson	365	.24	262	.26	372	.33	649	.42
Bryan	48	.04	163	.17	268	.21	144	.11
Burke	56	.03	197	.13	347	.22	72	.04
Central	732	.33	469	.31	549	.3	588	.42
North	630	.36	519	.5	401	.38	1,149	.59
Northwest	131	.08	545	.38	459	.37	111	.10
South	298	.13	245	.18	317	.24	119	.10
Technical	476	.82	325	.38	—	—	—	—
OPS Total	2,736	.20	2,725	.28	2,713	.29	2,832	.28

[†] Percentages in this column reflect projected Black enrollments, except for South, which includes Hispanic enrollment.

Source: OPS, "Racial Composition of Schools: October 1975," Research Report #213; OPS, *The Statistical Report of the School District of Omaha for the Year 1982-83*; OPS, *The Statistical Report of the School District of Omaha for the Year 1987-88*; OPS, "1987-88 Comparison of Enrollment and Racial Composition Actual and Projected Back to Neighborhood (Attendance Area)," 1988.

to design and implement a desegregation plan. The results of that plan can be seen in Table 1. This shows the numbers and percentages of minority enrollment in OPS high schools for 1975, 1982, and 1987 (the most current year for which data are available). As can be seen, the pattern of segregation in 1975 was severe. The older schools, with their lesser libraries, laboratories, and other facilities affecting the academic environment, were where minorities attended. Technical High School (since closed) had a student body over 80 percent minority. Minorities represented more than one-third of the student bodies of North and Central high schools. Only Benson, with one-fourth minority, approximated the district proportion (20 percent). South High School was the only older school with a lower than average minority student population (13 percent). By comparison, the newer schools — Bryan, Burke, and Northwest — were white schools with 4 percent, 3 percent, and 8 percent minorities respectively.

By 1982 that situation had changed dramatically, although not completely. North High School had actually increased its minority population to 50 percent, reflecting the expansion of the black population into the North High attendance zone. Technical had dropped to 38

percent minority while Bryan, Burke and Northwest had increased their minority enrollments to 17 percent, 13 percent, and 38 percent respectively.

The 1987 numbers show both a movement toward more even distribution of minority students among the Omaha high schools and the results of further changes in the living patterns of Omaha's minorities. Bryan and Burke increased their proportions of minority students, while North's minority enrollment declined to 38 percent. Benson's minority enrollment increased to 33 percent as more minorities moved into that attendance zone. Bryan and Burke are still below the district average of 29 percent but much closer than they were.

Omaha is still a segregated city, requiring policies to maintain a reasonable level of integration in the schools. This is apparent in the right columns of Table 1, which show the projections made by OPS for high school enrollments by race had there been no desegregation plan in effect.³ The pattern would reflect pre-desegregation plan conditions. North would become predominately minority and Benson and Central would have more than 40 percent minorities. Bryan, Northwest and South would decline to around 10 percent, and Burke would again become virtually white. It is because of this possibility (and the possibility of further federal court involvement) that OPS has decided to maintain the desegregation plan even though court oversight of the system was lifted in 1986.⁴

The pattern of minority enrollment in junior high and elementary schools also reflects the results of the OPS desegregation plan. Returning to purely neighborhood schools at these levels would mean even more segregation of Omaha's minority students.

Student/Teacher Ratios

The plan to desegregate OPS high schools seems to have had some interesting impacts on district staffing decisions. Table 2 compares student/teacher ratios for OPS high schools for the years 1975, 1982, and 1987. In 1975 there were relatively wide variations in these ratios among schools. Perhaps surprisingly, the lowest ratios tended to be in the older schools with higher minority enrollments. Tech, with its specialized curriculum, showed a very low ratio. But even North, South and Benson, with their traditional curricula, had ratios below the average for the district. Burke, on the other hand, had the highest ratio: nearly 27 students per teacher.

Table 2: Student/Teacher Ratios in OPS High Schools High Schools, 1975-1987

School	Student/Teacher Ratio Classroom Teachers			Student/Staff Ratio All Educational Staff		
	1975	1982	1987	1975	1982	1987
Bryan	21.60	19.38	18.71	20.18	16.85	16.00
Burke	26.71	19.33	19.61	24.85	16.92	16.85
Central	23.17	20.66	19.16	21.16	18.49	16.79
North	18.64	17.97	17.97	17.35	15.23	14.71
Northwest	22.26	19.46	19.08	20.79	17.03	16.20
South	21.93	18.91	18.49	20.22	16.70	14.63
Technical	9.57	13.33	—	7.68	11.61	—

Source: OPS, "Racial Composition of Schools: October 1975," Research Report #213; OPS, *Directory of the Omaha Public Schools, 1975*; OPS, *The Statistical Report of the School District of Omaha for the Year 1982-83*; OPS, *The Statistical Report of the School District of Omaha for the Year 1987-88*.

In 1982 ratios were more even among the schools. By 1987 the ratios were substantially equal—fewer than 3 students separated the largest (19.6/1) from the smallest (16.9/1) ratio. These ratios have declined in every high school.

A comparison of student/teacher ratios for the junior high schools in OPS shows that, as with the high schools, overall ratios have declined from 16.3/1 to 14.7/1. There was little variation from year to year.⁵

Achievement Tests

California Achievement Tests (CAT) are employed annually by OPS to assess the academic achievement of its students. These tests allow one to compare the achievement of Omaha students to a national norm. Omaha students, as a group, tend to do well on these test, ranking above the national average at all grade levels. How do minority students compare to white students in OPS and to the national norm? Table 3 shows the percentage of OPS students in 1985 and 1986 in each racial/ethnic group who scored in the highest 25 percent and the percent scoring above the national median. As can be seen, minority students do not do as well as white students. While nearly two-thirds to three-quarters of white students (depending on their grade levels) score above the national median in reading, only about one-third to one-half of minorities do. Hispanic percentages tend to be higher than those of the other minorities, while percentages for American Indians show the most variation. A similar pattern is seen in the percentages scoring in the highest 25 percent. Percentages of groups scoring above the 50th and above the 75th percentiles in mathematics also showed a similar pattern.

Still, large percentages of students in each group tend to score above the national average. Given the potential differences between minority and white scores due to cultural biases in the tests themselves, minority students probably are even less far "behind" their white peers than the scores indicate.

The simple comparison of minorities to Whites probably should not be taken as a measure of the school district's commitment to the education of minorities. One way to better assess these numbers in terms of academic preparation is to look at changes in achievement over time. In this regard the data show that the CAT scores of minority students do tend to improve as one compares lower grade levels to higher ones. And they tend to improve at a rate higher than that for Whites. This assessment, however, is contaminated by the fact that the achievement scores of different students are being compared. Comparisons of percentages of OPS students from 1986 to 1987 scoring above the national median do show improvements (see figures 1 and 2), although not to the point of equity.

Another way to assess change over time is to follow a group of students over a number of years. Preliminary research in progress by the research staff of OPS follows a representative sample of OPS students from grade 1 through grade 6. These data seem to indicate that on all three CAT subscales (reading, language and math), black students (the only minority group large enough in the sample to allow statistical comparisons) narrow the gap between themselves and their white counterparts over the six years. The data also seem to indicate that apart from race/ethnicity, the factors of socioeconomic status, family structure, and especially attendance affect CAT scores. Blacks who missed fewer than 20 days had average scores on all three subscales equivalent to their white counterparts.

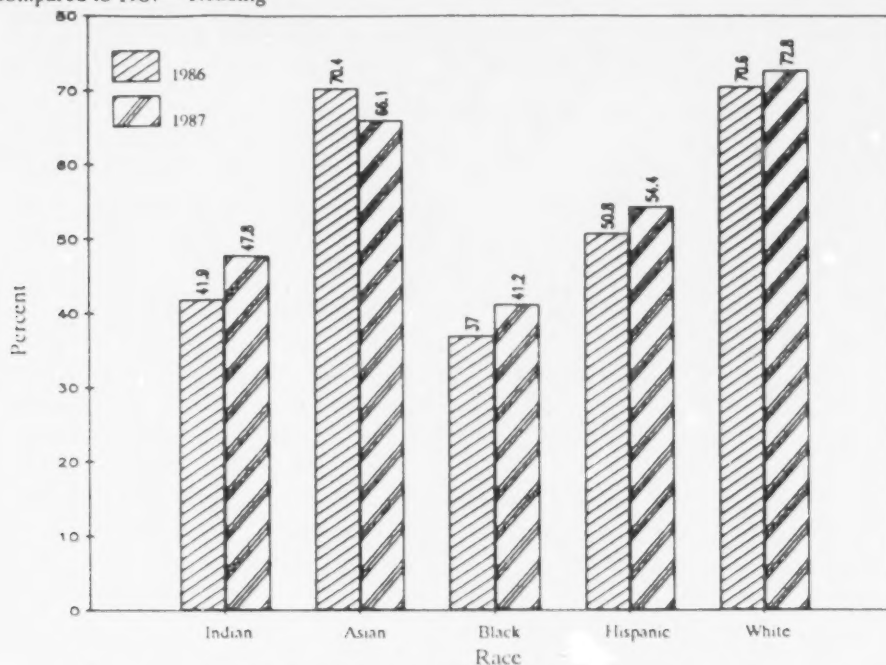
In summary, the evidence is that, while minorities do not start out with scores similar to white students, they do tend to catch up, especially when one accounts for factors beyond the school's control.

Table 3: Percentages of OPS Students Scoring Above the Seventy-fifth and Fiftieth Percentiles on California Achievement Tests, 1985-86 - 1986-87

Grade	Group	Percentile:	Reading				Mathematic			
			1986 75 +	1987 75 +	1986 50 +	1987 50 +	1986 75 +	1987 75 +	1987 50 +	1987 50 +
K	American Indian		14.6	23.1	34.1	59.6	23.8	32.7	33.3	59.6
	Black		15.2	13.7	37.3	35.6	27.6	24.7	44.2	50.9
	Hispanic		15.2	24.0	37.4	44.7	37.4	31.4	55.6	60.3
	White		41.9	44.8	73.4	74.7	52.8	54.3	70.5	82.2
1	American Indian		25.5	21.2	48.9	44.3	34.0	26.9	65.9	50.0
	Black		18.1	23.8	37.9	49.2	28.6	36.3	57.5	63.3
	Hispanic		28.0	30.9	49.5	59.4	35.5	45.5	65.6	78.0
	White		45.8	55.3	66.9	77.4	58.3	65.8	83.1	86.8
2	American Indian		10.0	25.0	27.5	56.2	17.9	39.6	48.7	60.4
	Black		12.4	15.6	36.9	44.3	17.6	26.3	43.6	53.5
	Hispanic		21.4	28.3	54.3	54.7	23.9	38.7	60.5	65.1
	White		45.2	47.7	73.0	73.6	50.0	56.5	76.3	79.6
3	American Indian		12.5	11.6	40.6	27.9	12.1	23.3	39.4	44.2
	Black		11.7	14.2	37.6	42.8	15.7	23.5	42.2	51.3
	Hispanic		22.2	23.8	56.9	60.0	26.8	30.0	55.0	68.8
	White		43.4	47.3	71.8	73.8	51.4	56.7	75.0	80.3
4	American Indian		16.1	17.9	38.7	51.2	19.4	20.5	29.1	51.3
	Black		13.3	14.3	38.7	42.8	15.9	20.4	39.5	46.7
	Hispanic		31.9	25.6	59.7	58.5	34.7	25.6	69.4	64.6
	White		44.7	48.7	72.4	76.8	48.4	53.9	74.4	78.8
5	American Indian		20.8	17.6	50.0	35.2	12.5	23.5	50.0	38.2
	Black		13.7	15.7	38.1	41.9	17.0	22.1	41.8	46.7
	Hispanic		24.7	34.2	56.2	59.5	31.1	33.8	54.4	65.0
	White		42.2	46.0	70.0	73.8	47.5	53.3	70.0	77.2
6	American Indian		38.1	18.5	61.9	51.8	42.9	37.0	61.9	74.0
	Black		14.6	17.7	36.7	40.9	20.3	22.8	48.2	50.1
	Hispanic		14.9	23.1	44.8	58.7	22.4	38.5	55.2	65.4
	White		44.8	44.2	70.4	72.1	51.8	56.1	76.4	80.2
8	American Indian		0.0	9.1	36.4	50.0	9.1	18.2	45.5	31.8
	Black		10.7	15.8	34.6	37.9	10.2	14.6	28.8	36.0
	Hispanic		15.9	23.5	54.5	51.4	34.1	20.3	61.4	44.9
	White		39.7	36.1	68.3	65.1	42.4	40.1	67.1	61.9
10	American Indian		33.3	27.8	50.0	55.6	22.2	16.7	61.1	44.5
	Black		10.5	10.1	33.8	32.2	9.1	7.7	26.8	27.9
	Hispanic		14.6	16.5	47.9	43.1	16.7	23.1	50.0	42.3
	White		38.3	34.2	68.9	65.0	36.7	34.0	66.8	61.6

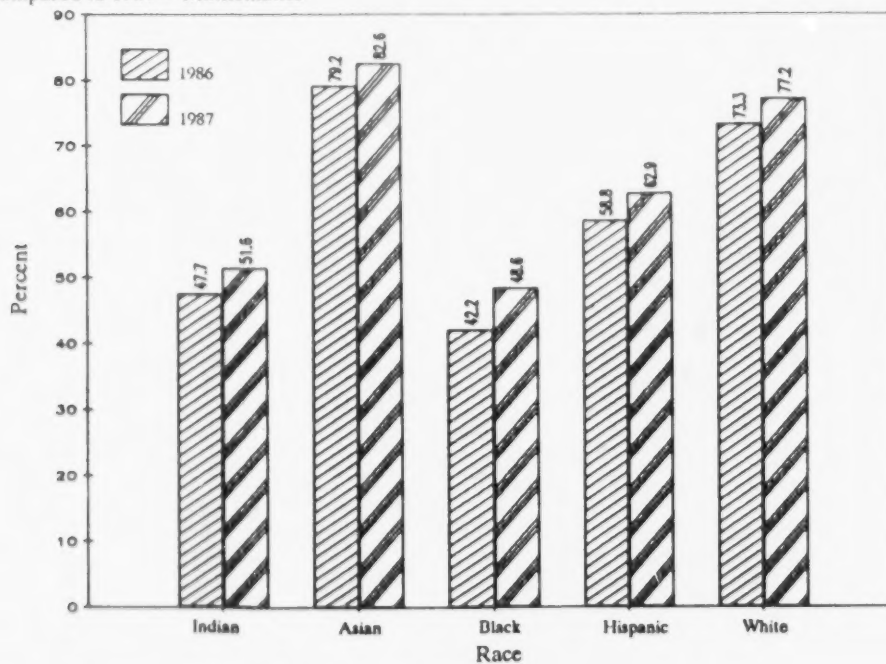
Source: OPS, "California Achievement Test Results by Race: 1985-86 - 1986-87," 1987

Figure 1 - California Achievement Tests Percentage of Students Above 50th Percentile Rank 1986 Compared to 1987— Reading



Source: Omaha Public Schools Division of Research.

Figure 2 - California Achievement Tests Percentage of Students Above 50th Percentile Rank 1986 Compared to 1987— Mathematics



Source: Omaha Public Schools Division of Research.

Special Needs

Good academic preparation includes taking into account the special needs of students. Four groups with special needs are the Learning Disabled, and those in the more severe categories of Educable Mentally Handicapped, Trainable Mentally Retarded, and Emotionally Disturbed.⁶ Another group is gifted students—those who can achieve beyond the level of the regular classroom. Services to the first groups should be designed to help students to overcome their disabilities through extra assistance and by developing alternate ways of working with learning problems. For the latter group services should encourage students to achieve to the extent of their abilities. For both the challenge is to see that those in need of the service are provided with it.

Table 4 shows rates of participation in each of the four special education programs and in the gifted program. Table 5 shows the ratios comparing minorities' participation to Whites'. Where possible, the tables display comparable average rates for the 100 largest public school districts in the U.S.

Participation of minorities in special education programs varies with the particular kind of disability. In each category, however, Hispanics tend to have rates comparable to or lower than

Table 4: Special Education and Gifted Participation by Race for Omaha Public Schools and Average of 100 Largest U.S. School Districts, 1984, 1986, 1988

	American Indian OPS	Hispanic Nation OPS	Black Nation OPS	White Nation OPS	Total Nation OPS				
-Percentage-									
Educable Mentally Handicapped									
1984	4.36	1.31	1.14	2.44	4.55	.87	1.60	1.50	2.40
1986	2.72	.55	1.08	2.07	3.93	.65	1.39	1.09	2.07
1988			1.37		3.40		1.27		1.87
Trainable Mentally Retarded									
1984	.87	.24	.61	.36	.60	.27	.64	.29	.63
1986	1.09	.27	.39	.41	.83	.27	.70	.31	.72
1988			.68		.67		.49		.55
Emotionally Disturbed									
1984	3.05	.41	.97	.82	3.59	.85	1.91	.74	2.33
1986	2.36	.38	1.00	.83	2.59	.93	1.36	.77	1.67
1988			1.09		2.45		1.15		1.50
Learning Disabled									
1984	5.23	3.69	2.99	4.13	5.95	4.00	4.60	3.90	4.88
1986	4.72	4.07	2.78	4.52	4.41	4.16	3.80	4.15	3.92
1988			2.66		3.76		3.40		3.51
Gifted									
1984		2.57	7.90	2.61	4.47	7.00	17.04	4.70	13.30
1986	5.26	2.93	7.86	3.20	5.99	7.97	17.04	5.47	13.68
1988			9.83		8.07		17.94		14.86

Source: OPS, "Civil Rights Survey Comparisons, 1984, 1986 and 1988," 1989.

those for Whites. In the Educable Mentally Handicapped category, white and Hispanic students have had comparable rates. Blacks and American Indians, however, have had higher participation rates, with Blacks somewhat more likely to be included in this category. The situation is similar in regard to the category of Emotionally Disturbed. White and Hispanic percentages are similar (around 1 to 2 percent) with Whites somewhat more likely than Hispanics to be given this designation. The rates for American Indians and Blacks are one and a half percentage points or more higher. Hispanics show the lowest rate for the Learning Disabled group; Whites, American Indians, and Blacks have rates that are fairly comparable. It is only in the area of Trainable Mentally Retarded that the four groups show only moderate difference in rates.

Table 4 also shows that rates for all groups in Omaha tend to be higher than the average for other U.S. school systems. This may indicate that OPS has a more developed special education program, providing services to more students in need than is the case elsewhere. Examination of Table 6 (below) will add to this discussion.

Table 5 shows the comparison between the White and minority rates of participation in special programs. The ratios in the table represent the percentage for the minority group divided by the percentage for Whites. Where the value is less than one, a member of the minority group is less likely to be included in that category than is a White. Where the value is greater than

Table 5: Minority-Group-to-White Ratios of Participation in Special Education and Gifted Programs for Omaha Public Schools and Average of 100 Largest U.S. School Districts, 1984, 1986, 1988

	American Indian OPS AI/W	Nation Hispanic H/W	OPS	Nation Black B/W	OPS
Educable Mentally Handicapped					
1984	2.73	1.51	.71	1.53	2.84
1986	1.96	.85	.78	3.18	2.83
1988			1.08		2.68
Trainable Mentally Retarded					
1984	1.36	.89	.95	1.33	.94
1986	1.56	1.00	.56	1.52	1.19
1988			1.39		1.37
Emotionally Disturbed					
1984	1.60	.48	.51	.96	1.88
1986	1.74	.41	.74	.89	1.90
1988			.95		2.13
Learning Disabled					
1984	1.40	.92	.65	1.05	1.29
1986	1.24	.98	.73	1.09	1.16
1988			.78		1.11
Gifted					
1984		.37	.46	.37	.26
1986	.31	.37	.46	.40	.35
1988			.55		.45

Source: OPS, "Civil Rights Survey Comparisons, 1984, 1986 and 1988," 1989.

one, the minority is more likely to be included. For example, a value of 2.00 would mean that a minority student is twice as likely as a white student to be included in that category.

Table 5 shows, as did table 4, that Hispanics are generally less likely than Whites to be in any special education category, while Blacks and American Indians were generally more likely. Blacks and American Indians were almost three times more likely than Whites to be in Educable Mentally Handicapped services. In the other categories disparities are somewhat less severe, although some ratios are close to two to one for the Emotionally Disturbed group.

Table 6 shows the comparison of each racial/ethnic group in Omaha to its national counterpart, represented by the average in the 100 largest public school systems in the United States. (Average rates for American Indians were not identified in the 100-city data.) Numbers greater than one show Omaha students to be proportionately more likely to receive special education services than is the case nationally; numbers less than one show Omahans to be less likely to receive the special education service.

Table 6: Omaha/National Ratios of Participation in Special Education and Gifted Programs, 1984 & 1986

	Hispanic	Black	White
Educable Mentally Handicapped			
1984	.87	1.86	1.84
1986	1.96	1.90	2.14
Trainable Mentally Retarded			
1984	2.54	1.67	2.37
1986	1.44	2.02	2.59
Emotionally Disturbed			
1984	2.37	4.38	2.25
1986	2.63	3.12	1.46
Learning Disabled			
1984	.81	1.42	1.15
1986	.68	.98	.91
Gifted			
1984	3.07	1.71	2.43
1986	2.68	1.87	2.14

Source: OPS, "Civil Rights Survey Comparisons, 1984, 1986 and 1988," 1989.

In almost all categories of special education, Omaha shows higher rates of participation than the average for 100 school systems regardless of the racial/ethnic group examined. The most distinctive disparity in the Omaha-to-Nation ratios is in the difference between black and white ratios for emotionally disabled. Omaha Blacks are three to four times more likely than the average Black in other cities to be so designated, while Whites in Omaha are twice as likely as are Whites elsewhere. This table seems to say one of two things: either OPS is more concerned about special education, providing services to more students in these categories of need than does the typical American public school system; or OPS is overzealous in identifying students for these programs regardless of race or ethnicity (although more zealous in regard to

some groups than others). If the former is the case, OPS should be applauded for working harder than most systems to meet these special needs. If, on the other hand, the latter is the case, OPS should reevaluate its standards for placement in these categories.

The OPS position is that it provides needed services. In response to a National Coalition of Advocates for Students (N.C.A.S.) report⁷ on the 100 largest school districts in the U.S., which gave OPS poor marks due to racial disparities in assigning students to special education programs, the OPS administration points out that "rigid qualification criteria are in place to identify students requiring services. Students must meet these criteria in order to be placed in the program."⁸ From OPS' point of view, "a broad, diligent program identifying and encompassing a maximal proportion of students who are in need of services will cause a school district to rank poorly on the N.C.A.S. . . . comparisons."⁹ That is, from OPS's perspective it looks bad by doing good. One should note, however, that from 1986 to 1988 participation in the Learning Disabled program declined for all groups, and declines in participation also occurred for Blacks in the Educable Mentally Handicapped, Trainable Mentally Retarded, and Emotionally Disturbed categories.

Programs for the gifted are on the other side of the Special Needs coin. These programs are supposed to identify students who would especially profit from enhancement or accelerated curricula. It is in this area that minority participation rates suffer in comparison with Whites'. Tables 4, 5 and 6 show, respectively, the rates of participation by group, minority-to-White participation ratios for Omaha, and Omaha-to-national participation ratios. Data for 1988 show that white students in Omaha had an 18 percent chance of participating in gifted programs while Hispanics had nearly a 10 percent chance and Blacks had an 8 percent chance. Rates for American Indians were available only for 1986, when they were 5 percent. In all, Blacks and Hispanics were only about half as likely to be included in these programs as Whites, and American Indians were only one-third as likely as Whites to participate (see Table 5).

While minority participation in gifted programs is less than white participation, the numbers in Tables 4 and 5 do show that there was some improvement from 1986 to 1988, especially for Blacks. The Black- to-White ratio of participation went from .26 to .45, and the Hispanic-to-White ratio went from .46 to .55. Still, a substantial disparity remains.

Finally, and to the credit of OPS, Table 6 shows that, while a disparity exists in Omaha, more minorities participate in gifted programs in Omaha than in most other cities. While on average only 5 out of 100 students elsewhere are in gifted programs, 15 out of 100 are in gifted programs in Omaha. That is, Omaha apparently has a substantially larger gifted program than is commonly the case. The result is that Blacks are almost twice as likely and Hispanics and Whites are more than twice as likely to be in a gifted program in Omaha than they would be in the average public school system.

Graduates

As mentioned above, perhaps the acid test of academic preparation is the ability of graduates of the public school system to move on to higher education or into the job market. OPS annually surveys its graduates during the summer and fall after graduation to learn their after-graduation activities. Table 7 presents the results of these surveys for 1984 through 1988. This table allows one to trace the pattern of activities of each group over time and to compare the activities among groups. Activities are reported in the broad categories of pursuing education, employed (full time and part time), entered military, seeking employment, and not seeking employment.

Table 7: Five-Year Summary of Activities of OPS Graduates, By Race -- 1983-84 through 1987-88

	American Indian					Hispanic					Black					White				
	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Total Graduates	17	17	19	9	18	73	55	60	48	52	618	578	541	516	491	1,968	1,886	1,745	1,614	1,722
	-Percentage-																			
Pursuing Further Education																				
College/University	29.40	23.50	26.30	33.30	44.40	43.80	30.90	38.30	31.30	46.20	28.10	33.20	37.50	32.90	36.00	41.70	45.40	45.90	48.30	50.90
Technical College	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.65	3.30	4.20	0.00	2.80	4.80	3.50	3.50	3.70	4.10	3.80	4.20	4.60	3.40
Health Occupation Program	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	.20	.20	.40	.20	.70	.50	.30	.50	.30
Business/Trade School	5.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6.90	3.65	0.00	2.10	1.90	5.00	5.70	4.30	5.40	6.50	2.90	2.50	3.30	3.30	3.40
Total Pursuing Education	35.30	23.50	26.30	33.30	44.40	50.70	38.20	41.60	37.60	48.10	35.90	43.90	45.50	42.20	46.40	49.40	52.20	53.70	56.70	58.00
Employment																				
Employed full time	29.40	35.30	21.10	33.30	27.80	26.00	27.30	26.70	22.90	25.00	19.30	19.00	14.60	20.20	21.40	27.10	26.40	22.60	23.00	21.60
Military	5.90	0.00	10.50	11.10	11.10	2.70	1.80	8.30	4.20	1.90	6.00	8.70	8.30	8.70	8.10	2.90	4.50	4.60	5.10	4.80
Employed part time	5.90	23.50	15.80	11.10	5.60	11.00	18.20	11.70	16.70	13.50	14.70	14.00	11.80	14.00	8.10	10.30	8.80	8.70	8.20	7.10
Total Full Time Employed	35.30	35.30	31.60	44.40	38.90	28.70	29.10	35.00	27.10	26.90	25.30	27.70	22.90	28.90	29.50	30.00	30.90	27.20	28.10	26.40
Total Employed	41.20	58.80	47.40	55.50	44.50	39.70	47.30	46.70	43.80	40.40	40.00	41.70	34.70	42.90	37.60	40.30	39.70	35.90	36.30	33.50
Total School & Full-Time Work		70.60	58.80	57.90	77.70	83.30	79.40	67.30	76.60	64.70	61.20	75.00	71.60	68.40	71.10	75.90	79.40	83.10	80.90	84.40
Not Employed																				
Actively Seeking Employment	0.00	5.90	26.30	11.10	5.60	5.50	3.60	6.70	4.20	1.90	7.00	5.90	7.20	5.00	5.90	3.20	3.10	3.80	2.50	2.00
Not Seeking Employment	5.90	5.90	0.00	0.00	0.00	2.70	3.65	1.70	6.30	1.90	3.90	4.30	3.30	2.30	1.80	2.40	2.30	2.00	1.20	1.20
Total Not Employed	5.90	11.80	26.30	11.10	5.60	8.20	7.25	8.40	10.50	3.80	10.90	10.20	10.50	7.30	7.70	5.60	5.40	5.80	3.70	3.20
Unable To Contact	17.60	5.90	0.00	0.00	5.60	1.40	7.30	3.30	8.30	7.70	13.40	4.20	9.20	7.60	8.10	4.60	2.70	4.50	3.20	5.30

Source: Omaha Public Schools, Five-Year Summary of Activities of Graduates, by Race: 1983-84 - 1987-1988

Fifty to 60 percent of the white graduates pursue education, predominately in a college or university. For Hispanics these percentages range from 38 to 50 percent; for Blacks, from 35 to 46 percent; and for American Indians, from 23 to 44 percent. In all cases percentages have increased from 1984 to 1988, although there are fluctuations across these years. Blacks consistently show higher percentages (from 4.3 to 6.5) going to business or trade schools than do the other groups, but they are about as likely as Whites to attend a technical community college. A sizable proportion of students from all groups also are working part time (and in a few cases, full time) while going to college.

These figures do not quite present the whole picture, however. For example, in 1988 OPS reports a decline in black males seeking higher education (reflecting a national trend), while percentages of black females going to college have increased. Minorities are less likely overall to pursue education than are Whites, but the gap is moderate and seems to be declining.

The figures for full-time employment reflect only those graduates not pursuing education. These numbers will be lower, therefore, for groups with higher percentages pursuing education, and vice-versa. Clearly, greater percentages of minorities — especially American Indians and Blacks — than Whites choose to enter the job market after graduation.

White percentages for full-time employment range from 21.6 to 27.1. Comparable figures for Hispanics are from 22.9 to 27.3; for Blacks they are from 14.6 to 21.4; and for American Indians they are from 21.1 to 35.3. Values for part-time employment, although lower, follow a similar pattern.

The military attracts a varying percentage of Omaha graduates each year. Whites enlist at a rate of from 2.9 to 5.1 percent. American Indians show the highest percentages while Hispanics are least likely to choose the military.

When one combines the percentages in school and the percent ages employed, either full- or part time, more than 80 percent of all groups are accounted for. Whites show percentages between 80 and 84 either in school or employed. Minorities are less likely to be in either one of these categories, although in some years percentages are comparable. Blacks average around 13 percentage points behind Whites; American Indians 12 points; and Hispanics 10 points. Also, while the percentages for Whites vary only slightly over the five years, those for the other groups vary more widely, perhaps reflecting the greater effect that fluctuations in the employment market have on minorities. In any event, usually at least two-thirds of the graduates from each group either pursue their educations or enter full-time jobs after leaving an OPS high school.

It is the figures for unemployment that are of greatest concern. These represent, at least in part, those who have not yet made a successful transition from high school into the more adult world. For some this may be a choice; for others it is a problem.

The percentages of each group seeking employment vary from group to group and over time within groups. Blacks tend to show higher percentages on average in this category than do the other groups. However, American Indians show the widest variation; both the highest percentages and the lowest. Of the minorities, Hispanics tend to show consistently low numbers in this area. Black percentages are between 5.0 and 7.2.

Percentages of those not seeking employment also show group-to-group variations. Percentages for American Indians are low, usually 0. For Hispanics and Blacks, however, they range as high as 6.3 percent for the former and 4.3 for the latter.

Finally, the total percentages for those not working reflect the patterns described above. Whites show the lowest and most consistent rates. Blacks have the highest rates on average, starting at almost 11 percent in 1984 and lowering only to 7.7 percent in 1987. Hispanic rates

tend to be somewhat lower than those for Blacks. Again, American Indians have the greatest variation in rates, comparing to those of Whites in 1984 but increasing to as high as 26.3 percent in 1986, then dropping to 5.6 percent in 1988.

Summary

The five areas examined in this report show that OPS has taken and continues to take steps to provide a more socially, economically, and ethnically diverse student body in its schools. The policy of desegregation, now voluntarily in place, should provide learning environments more reflective of society at large, providing opportunities for social as well as academic learning.

Along with the move toward less segregated student bodies, the teaching staff has been more equitably distributed among the individual schools. At the same time, student/teacher ratios have declined, providing teachers with better opportunities to react to the needs of their students.

Results of achievement tests show that minority students in OPS tend to score lower than do Whites. The differential tends to decrease over time, but it does not disappear.

The data show that OPS students are more likely than most U.S. students to participate in programs for those with learning deficiencies and for the gifted. As a result, minorities in Omaha are more likely to obtain remedial or enhancement services than are their counterparts in many other cities. Still, minorities in Omaha tend to be placed in remedial programs more than Whites, while they are less likely than Whites to be identified as gifted.

When one looks at the activities of those who have graduated from the system, one can see that a large percentage of all groups continue their education and/or find employment. However, a disparity between minorities and Whites continues in this area.

Endnotes

1. In the context of this paper, *minority* refers to people who are either American Indian, Hispanic, or Black Americans.
2. OPS, Office of Research, "Factors Which Make the School District of Omaha Unique," 1988.
3. With the exception of the scores for South High School, estimates of minority enrollments reflect only estimated Black enrollments as reported in the OPS document, "1987-88 Comparison of Enrollment and Racial Composition Actual and Projected Back to Neighborhood (Attendance Area)." For South High School the actual 1988 Hispanic enrollment was added to the estimated Black enrollment. This number was divided by the projected total enrollment to obtain the estimated percentage of minorities.
4. OPS, *The Plan. Desegregation of the Omaha Public Schools, 1988-1989*.
5. OPS, *The Statistical Report for the School District of Omaha, 1982-83*, Table 14; *The Statistical Report for the School District of Omaha, 1987-88*, Table 13.
6. **Learning Disability** is defined as "a disorder in one or more of the basic processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written language. It may manifest itself in an inability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations." **Educable Mentally Handicapped** means below average general intellectual functioning existing with deficits in adaptive behavior which adversely affects a child's development or educational performance." **The Trainable Mentally Retarded** "function in the moderate, severe and profound levels of retardation with commensurate adaptive behavior skills. In addition, some have been identified as having physical and or sensory handicapping conditions." **Emotionally Disturbed** refers to "conditions exhibiting one or more of the following over a long time to a marked degree which adversely affects a child's development or educational performance or, in the case of children below the age of five, their development. 1.) Inability to

learn which cannot be explained by intelligence, sensory, or health factors. 2.) Inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers or teachers. 3.) Inappropriate types of behaviors or feelings under normal circumstances. 4.) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression. 5.) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with school or personal problems." The above definitions are from OPS, "Special Educational Services," no date.

7. National Coalition of Advocates for Students. *A Special Analysis of 1986 Elementary and Secondary School Civil Rights Survey Data, Region 5*, Boston, 1988.
8. OPS, "Civil Rights Survey Comparisons, 1984, 1986 and 1988," 1989, p. 2.
9. Ibid., p. 3.